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UNCLAS HANOI 000309

SIPDIS

FOR CA/OCS/ACS/EAP; EAP/EX; EAP/BCLTV
BANGKOK FOR RMO, CDC, AID (TDOLAN)
STATE PASS HHS for Marie Haring Sweeney
USDA FOR FAS/PASS TO APHIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AMED](#) [AMGT](#) [CASC](#) [EAGR](#) [TBIO](#) [VM](#) [AFLU](#)

SUBJECT: VIETNAM - AVIAN FLU UPDATE #7

CURRENT STATUS

1. (U) WE ARE AWARE OF DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN THE NUMBERS OF CASES OF AVIAN INFLUENZA (AI) IN HUMANS IN OUR CABLES, REPORTED BY WHO, AND THE NUMBER REPORTED BY THE GVN'S MOH. THE STATISTICS REPORTED IN OUR CABLES REFLECT WHAT WE BELIEVE TO BE MOST RECENT RELIABLE NUMBERS BASED ON THE DISCUSSIONS HELD EACH NIGHT BY MEMBERS OF THE WHO AI INVESTIGATIVE TEAM (INCLUDING CDC AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL EPIDEMIOLOGISTS AND CLINICIANS). MOST RECENT DISCUSSIONS INDICATE THAT THERE ARE 13 CASES OF LABORATORY-CONFIRMED H5 INFLUENZA IN HUMANS, ALTHOUGH THE MOH HAS OFFICIALLY REPORTED 10. THE BULK OF THESE CASES HAVE OCCURRED IN OR AROUND HANOI AND A FEW ARE IN HCMC. ONE OF THE NEWLY CONFIRMED CASES IS A DEATH IN THE CENTRAL PROVINCES, THE FIRST IN THAT REGION. IN ADDITION, WE ARE AWARE THAT THE LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL PRESS IS REPORTING ADDITIONAL CASES OF H5 INFLUENZA IN HUMANS. THESE ACTUALLY REFLECT A COMBINATION OF "POSSIBLE" CASES OF INFLUENZA A BASED ON RAPID TESTING. THESE MAY OR MAY NOT BE H5. THE FIGURES ALSO INCLUDE "SUSPECT" CASES OF FEVER AND RESPIRATORY SYMPTOMS IN HUMANS THAT ARE BEING INVESTIGATED BUT THAT MAY OR MAY NOT BE INFLUENZA. CDC HANOI CONFIRMS THAT OVER 50 CASES OF SUSPECTED OR POSSIBLE INFLUENZA ARE BEING INVESTIGATED BY MOH (OFTEN WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE WHO INVESTIGATIVE TEAM); MOST OF THESE WILL NOT HAVE INFLUENZA AS SEVERAL ARE BEING RULED OUT DAILY.

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

2. (U) There is also an active foot and mouth outbreak in Vietnam. This alone is not alarming as Vietnam regularly suffers from foot and mouth outbreaks several times per year. However, pigs infected by foot and mouth may be more vulnerable to both avian and human influenza, and thus more of a risk in mixing the viruses leading to human-to-human community spread.

AFFECTED PROVINCES

3. (U) REGARDING INFLUENZA IN BIRDS, THE NUMBER OF PROVINCES REPORTING BIRD DEATHS RELATED TO AVIAN INFLUENZA HAS INCREASED TO 53 (OF 64). THE LOCAL PAPERS DESCRIBE CULLING EFFORTS ON THE FRONT PAGE; HOWEVER, THE WHO INVESTIGATIVE TEAM MEETINGS INDICATE THAT WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A FEW PROVINCES, MOST CULLING IS ACTUALLY PICKING UP DEAD BIRDS. AVAILABILITY OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) REMAINS LIMITED. INCENTIVES FOR POULTRY GROWERS TO SURRENDER BIRDS ARE ALSO LIMITED.

4. (U) ACCORDING TO A SPREADSHEET DEVELOPED BY THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT'S DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HEALTH, FIRST REPORTS OF AVIAN FLU IN VIETNAM OCCURRED IN DECEMBER 2003 IN 11 PROVINCES SCATTERED AROUND THE COUNTRY. THE NUMBER OF REPORTED AREAS AFFECTED HAS INCREASED RAPIDLY IN RECENT DAYS AT BOTH THE PROVINCIAL AND COMMUNE LEVEL, POSSIBLY BECAUSE OFFICIALS HAVE RETURNED FROM THE WEEK-LONG TET HOLIDAYS AND ARE DOING MORE REPORTING, AND ALSO POSSIBLY BECAUSE THE MEDIA HAS FOCUSED ATTENTION ON THE ISSUE.
BURGHARDT